

## Terminology in Health Care and Public Health Settings

### Unit 1a Understanding Medical Words

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## Medical Terminology

- Studying medical terminology is like learning a new language
- Basic rules for building terms will help you both build and translate many different words
- You must be able to put words together or build words from their parts
  - Like putting the pieces together of a puzzle

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## Understanding Medical Terms

- It is impossible to memorize all of the thousands of medical terms
- You can figure out the meaning of many different words by analyzing the word parts
  - Word roots
  - Prefixes
  - Suffixes
  - Combining forms

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## Basic Word Parts

- **Word root** is the general meaning of the term
- **Prefixes** are added to the beginning of the word.
- **Suffixes** are added to the ending of the word.
- **Combining vowels** connect other word parts

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## Basic Word Parts

### Word Part      Example (Meaning)

- |                  |   |
|------------------|---|
| • Word root      | • <b>cardiology</b> (study of the heart)              |
| • Prefix         | • <b>tachycardia</b> (condition of a fast heart)      |
| • Suffix         | • <b>carditis</b> (inflammation of the heart)         |
| • Combining form | • <b>cardiomyopathy</b> (disease of the heart muscle) |

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## Word Root

- **Core** part of the term
- Provides general meaning of the word
- Usually gives a body part
  - oste = bone
  - cardi = heart
  - rhino = nose

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## Combining Vowels

- Make it possible to pronounce long terms
- Usually an “o”
- Combine two word parts:
  - Between two word roots
  - Between word root and suffix

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## Combining Vowel Rules

- Between word root and suffix
- If the suffix begins with a **vowel**
  - **Do not** use a combining vowel
  - Arthritis, not arthroit~~is~~
- If the suffix begins with a **consonant**
  - **Use** a combining vowel
  - Arthro~~scope~~, not arthroscope

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## Combining Vowel Rules

- Combining vowel is typically kept between two word roots
- Even if the second word root begins with a vowel
  - gastroenteritis, not gastrenteritis

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## Combining Form

- Typically used to write word roots
- Also use the word root/combining vowel format
- Examples:
  - cardi/o
  - hepat/o
  - gastr/o

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## Examples of Combining Forms

- |                     |                                   |
|---------------------|-----------------------------------|
| • arthr/o – joint   | • nephro – kidney                 |
| • cardi/o – heart   | • neur/o – nerve                  |
| • dermat/o – skin   | • ot/o – ear                      |
| • enter/o – small   | • pulmon/o – lung                 |
|                     | • rhin/o – nose                   |
| intestine           | • ur/o – urine,<br>urinary system |
| • gastr/o – stomach |                                   |
| • hemat/o – blood   |                                   |

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